

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, September 19. 1691.

Quest. 1.

A Woman at Rochester happening to fall sick, was extremely ill almost to Death; she had two Children as Nurse about ten Miles from the place, and she had a great desire to see her Children, but those that were about her knew very well that she was far incapable of such a Journey; she fell into a very deep sleep, and when she awoke, she said that she had seen her Children; those that did watch her, told her that she had not been out of her Bed; she said that she had seen them, and now was willing to dye, which she did immediately: As soon as she was dead, the Nurse which was ten Miles distant, came running in a great Fright, and said she had seen her Mistress, and that she told her Children and turn'd them: (for that was the Expression.) I pray your Sentiments how this could be, that the Woman's Soul should take Wing, and return again to its old Habitation? or, Whether it be Consonant to Scripture? and whether the Soul did agrandize Air so as to make a Personal Appearance?

Answe. We meet with parallel Instances in History; Falgos. (and also) Korman. de Mirac. Mort. relates, that there were two Brothers, Knights of Rome, the Elder of 'em was named *Corfiaius*, who being in the repute of all Men dead, the Tables of his *Last Will and Testament* were recited; in which he had made his Brother the Heir of all he had; but in the midst of his *Funeral Preparations* he rose with great *Chearfulness* upon his Legs, and said that he had been with his Brother, who had recommended the *Care of his Daughter* unto him, and had also shewed him where he had hid a *great Quantity of Gold* under ground, wherewith he should defray his *Funeral Expences*: While he was speaking in this manner, to the *Admiration* of all that were present, there came a *Messenger* with the *News* of his Brothers Death, and the *Gold* was also found in the very place as he had said. — But what is yet a stranger Relation, and mention'd by the said last Author, is this — *Everardus Ambula* a *German Knight*, fell sick in *Germany* in the time of *Pope Innocent the Third*, and when he had lain as one for some time dead, returning to himself, he said, That his *Soul was carried by Evil Spirits* into the *City of Jerusalem*, thence into the *Camp of Saladine*, who then reigned in *Egypt*, from whence it was conveyed to *Lombardy*, where in a certain *Wood* he had spoken with a *German Friend* of his: Lastly, he was brought to the *City of Rome*, the *Sight, the Form of Places and Buildings* of which, together with the *Features* of divers *Princes* there, he most exactly described; but what is yet stranger, he with whom he said he did *Converse* in the *Wood*, affirmed that he hid there at the same time and hour discoursed with this *Everardus* according as he had declared. Was *Plato* or *Pythagoras* alive, we know what use they would make of these Instances toward a *Transmigration of Souls*. Our *Thoughts upon the whole* are only these, that these Souls went not to *Ramble of themselves*, but were convey'd by *Spirits* that had some particular *Commission to guard 'em, and make Organs of Perception for 'em*, for the Soul cannot act of it self but confusely: 'Tis said when *Lazarus dyed*, he was carried by *Angels into Abraham's bosom*, not fled thither himself. There are particular Instances, perhaps mostly for the Convincing of such Persons as believe nothing of Spirits or Witches. Let such as are not satisfied of the possibility of such things, repair to the *Rotterdam Coffee-house* in *Finch-lane*, where they may see the *Original Letter* that relates to the particular Passage mentioned in the Question, and more Arguments for the *Credibility* of this strange Instance than we have here taken Notice of.

Quest. 2. There was a certain Person in the World, whom I design'd for my Wife, but was outvail'd by Death; whilst she was alive, our Friendship was to an Excess; and now she is dead, tho' I have endeavour'd all I can to the contrary, my Grief is such, as has reduced me to a great baser of my

Life: besides which, I begin to Daze, and am ready to run Distracted — I desire to know whether in this Condition I may not voluntarily resign my *Life*? and whether such an *Act* may not, by the *Unhappiness* of my *Circumstances*, be accounted *Pardonable in the sight of God*?

Answe. We can offer the same Remedy as has been already effectual under the same Circumstances. *Natural Philosophy* teaches, that to trouble our selves for what is out of our Power, is as great a Madness as striving to make three *Nineteen*, or to hinder the *Revolution of the Heavens*. *Christianity* (which is yet a more refin'd sort of *Philosophy*) teaches us, that 'tis impossible to escape *Uneasiness* where we give that to the *Creatures* which is peculiar to the *Creator*; for the *Mind being Eternal*, no *Temporal thing* can be a fit *Object* for it, no more than *sounds* are proper *Objects* for the *Eye, or Sights* for the *Pallate*, as we have formerly urged: Besides, if the *Loss* of a *Creature*, who was only an *Emanation* of the *great Divine Original*, is to afflict and grieve us, how intollerable wou'd the *Loss* of the *Original* it self be? or if we are unhappy in the deprivation of one *single imperfect Good* for a little time, in what a *Cafe* shou'd we be in, if we shou'd be depriv'd of all *Good* for *ever*? We are *Creatures*, and as such owe a dependance to the *Author of our Being*, therefore it wou'd be an *unpardonable Theft* to dispose of our selves without his *License*. A *Commander* will punish a *private Centinel* that leaves his *Post* without his *Consent*, and can *God* who has a *far greater Right* over his *Creatures* take it well to see us slight his *Appointments*, or take upon us to *Censure his Actions*? for 'tis in *Effect* an *Arraigning his Wisdom*, when we think we can provide better for our selves than he does. A little *Time* and *Converte* will wear off these *blacker Thoughts*; (for what can be *blacker than Self murder?*) when that is *Committed*, there's no *Remedy*, but a more inexpressible plunge into *Misery*. *Hell* is only *remedies*, but nothing else. *Secure your Duty to God*, and rest satisfied, you will soon be *Master of a quiet, easie Breast*.

Quest. 3. If a *Man* has a *Brother*, by *Nature or Affinity*, that *owes 2 or 300 l.* and is not *worth half so much*, but goes off with all, with an *Intention to pay none*, or not half he's able — he deposits this with a *Brother*, confiding in him, and won't be persuaded to pay *as far as it goes*: Whether or no the *Brother* be *oblig'd in Point of Honesty* to do *Justice to the Creditors in revealing this Money*?

Answe. The very Question is its own *Answe*. Every one is obliged to *do Justice*, if even himself is concern'd; and no *Brother* can be nearer. He may as well be *accessary to a Robbery* as a *Cheat*; for this is no *better*, and he is no *other*; nay, 'tis in some sort *worse* than a *Robbery on the High-way* — that I may guard my self from, but breach of *Faith* I cannot; and indeed it seems a *Hardship* in our *Laws*, that a poor *Shoplift* shou'd be *Hang'd* for breaking in and pilfering a few *Goods*, not perhaps 5 l. nay, not perhaps twenty *Shillings* value, and yet one that takes one hundred, two hundred, or a thousand *Pounds* worth, after having rioted away one part of it, shou'd with *impunity* carry off the other into the *Mint or Frys*, and send it going after the same rate, or else deposit it in a *second or third Hand*, who if he keeps it from the *Creditors*, is just as *honest* as the *Pick-pockets receiver*, who *hands away the Prey* which his *Brother Rogue* has *angled* for.

Quest. 4. Gentlemen, You advertise in several of your *Mercuries* that *Mr. Mason can Teach the most Exact and Shortest Short-hand yet Extant*. Quere. Whether any *Person* can by that *Short-hand* take a *Sermon or Speech Verbatim*? and how long it will be (if he allows himself three hours a day to learn it) before he attains to that *Perfection*? and whether he can *Learn by the last Book* *Mr. Mason hath*

Publ.

Published, without any further Instruction or Direction from him? Pray give a speedy Answer to this Question, because I would lose no time in Learning.

Ans. Your three Questions in one we shall Answer severally.

1. Whether any Person can by Mr. Mason's Short-hand take a Sermon or Speech Verbatim?

Ans. Yes, divers to our Knowledge do frequently do it, and some under fourteen Years of Age will do the like.

2. How long will it be (allowing three hours a Day to learn) before one attain to that Perfection?

Ans. The said Author can Teach the whole Art, fairly to Write, and distinctly to Read any thing writ thereby in English, in the space of a Month or six Weeks: But it may reasonably be supposed a longer time will be required for practice, before such a *Swiftneſſe* can be attain'd as is requisite for the taking of a Sermon or Speech *Verbatim*.

3. Whether one can learn by the last Book Mr. Mason hath Published, without any further Instructions or Directions from him?

Ans. That Book is generally owned to be the best *Short-hand in Print*; but it being one Sheet of Paper, printed by a Copper-Plate on one side only, it could not contain sufficient Directions, and therefore it was never designed to Teach any without the *Authors Assistance*; (altho' several *Ingenious Persons* have attain'd to a good degree of Perfection by the Book alone) yet his *Directions*, and that large *Additional Treasury of New and extraordinary brief Rules*, which never yet saw the Light, being lately stored up by him, and referred for all such Lovers of that Art as shall apply to him for *Instructions*, will not only facilitate the Work, by making it twice as short when learned, but also Create much pleasure and delight to the *Ingenious* in learning them.

Quest. 5. Whether there's any such thing as the Perfection of a Language, and wherein it consists, and whether our Language is now in its height, or when it was so?

Ans. This may be a more difficult Question than at first it appears. All Languages are in a continual flux, one Age making still Additions to the past, or at least altering or taking away many Words from it; that Comparison of the Poets being extreamly apt — that Words are like Leaves, the Old still wearing off and New springing up in their rooms. The Grammarians, whose unenvy'd Business 'tis to *Beat Languages*, as *Oldham* calls it, have almost demonstrated that the *Phœnitian* is only a Corruption or Dialect of the *Hebrew*, the *Greek*, and perhaps many other Languages of the *Phœnitian*, the old *Roman* of the *Greek*, the very Characters being the same, as may be seen in old Inscriptions and Monuments. On the other side, the modern *Greek* and *Russian* from the antient *Classick Greek*, the *Italian*, *French*, *Spanish*; *Portuguese* from the Corruption of the *Latin*, and its adulterous mixtures with several barbarous Languages, every one of which daily alter, and are still like to do so as long as the World lasts; and when they are so much alter'd that the greatest part of the Words come to be chang'd, it's probable enough that these will still be call'd New Languages. Thus 'twas here in *England*; the old *Saxon* is undoubtedly the proper *English* Tongue, our very Countrey taking its last and most famous Name from those *Angli*; and yet our present *English* is as absolutely a different Language from it as the old *Greek* is from the *Roman*. But still, which is more to our present purpose, old *Chaucer*, *Gower*, and their Contemporaries were call'd great Refiners of our *English* Language, and undoubtedly were thought to have brought it to as great a Perfection by their Contemporaries, as we say a *Waller*, a *Dryden*, a *S—s* or a *B—s* have in our Age brought it. And 'twas just the same Case with *Ennius* and *Lucilius* in their times, who were thought as well of by others, and spoke as ill of their Language who went before 'em, as *Horace* or any of the Critics of *Augustus* his Court who came after 'em. But the mentioning his Court recalls to mind the Notion of some Men, and we think the most common of any other, concerning the Perfection of any Language: *That the Court is the Standard of a Language, all own, that then the Language is in perfection when the Empire is in perfection, and the Court at the greatest height, is ge-*

nerally held, and an Instance given thereof in that of *Augustus Caesar*. But still the difficulty seems to recur — is not this a begging the Question! and how know I that the Language of the *Romans* was in greater or more proper Perfection at that time than 'twas in the Reign of *Augustus*, or in the greatest height of what is call'd *Barbarism*? or is there any reason that he who Conquers most, his Language must be best, which seems the Case of *Augustus* — if so, the barbarous *Goths* and *Huns* had afterwards as good a Title to *Purity of Language* as the *Romans* before, the *Romans* being at first only a Colluvies of Robbers got together, and hardly of so honourable an Original as those who afterwards turn'd 'em out, or became their Masters. Accordingly if it be said that then a *Language* degenerates when it comes to be mingled with any *barbarous*, that is, *Foreign Words*; it must at this rate be said, it always degenerates, because all *Languages* daily Enfranchise such *Foreign Words* as they find necessary or convenient. But all this is only *Negative*, 'twill be still said we are never the nearer. Where shall we fix the Perfection? or is there any or No? We think there is, and in these two things it must be fix'd or no where — in the pleasingness and tunableness of the Accent, and Expressiveness and Fulness of the *Language* — and if this may be the *Standard*, we are sure our *Language* is now at or near the *Achme*, and has not been so in former Ages.

Quest. 6. What's the Reason of hating Cheese and other Antipathies?

Ans. Very often, we believe, nothing in the World but an inveterate Custom. Sometimes it has we own a deeper root, and may probably spring from some desire or aversion in the pregnant Mother. At other 'tis an *Occult Quality*, that is, in plain English, *No Body knows what*, but a thing as purely *unaccountable* as the Complexions, Features, or common Inclinations of different Men, one whereof loves one sort of Fruit or Meat better than another, tho' all the World can tell no Reason why.

Q. The Querist troubled in Body, Mind, Memory, &c. has his Answer Numb. 24. of the 2d. Volume, Qu. 2.

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